

Important Advances in Clinical Medicine

Epitomes of Progress -- Psychiatry

The Scientific Board of the California Medical Association presents the following inventory of items of progress in Psychiatry. Each item in the judgment of a panel of knowledgeable physicians, has recently become reasonably firmly established, both as to scientific fact and important clinical significance. The items are presented in simple epitome and an authoritative reference, both to the item itself and to the subject as a whole is generally given for those who may be unfamiliar with a particular item. The purpose is to assist the busy practitioner, student, research worker or scholar to stay abreast of these items of progress in Psychiatry which have recently achieved a substantial degree of authoritative acceptance, whether in his own field of special interest or another.

The items of progress listed below were selected by the Advisory Panels to the Section on Psychiatry of the California Medical Association and the summaries were prepared under their direction.

Reprint requests to: Division of Scientific and Educational Activities, 693 Sutter Street, San Francisco, Ca. 94102

Current Patterns of Drug Misuse

DRUG MISUSE may be currently divided into seven categories. By far the most common drug of abuse remains alcohol; 5.5 percent of all drinkers are estimated to suffer eventually some syndrome of alcoholism. Barbiturates constitute the next most serious drug abuse pattern; a death rate of 25 per 100,000 population may be anticipated in urban areas, particularly on the east and west coasts. There are an estimated 50,000 active heroin addicts in California, an increasing number of whom are from the middle and upper classes. Amphetamines remain a drug abuse

problem in the form of excessive medical prescription for antidepressant and weight control problems; use from illicit sources also continues to be a problem. Intravenous injection of amphetamine appears to be significantly diminishing, subsequent to the reports of the polyarteritis nodosa syndrome. The inhalation of solvents continues to be a problem among disadvantaged and minority groups, and has recently appeared among some Indian groups. The use of marijuana and other hallucinogens, continues to be the most major drug abuse problem, primarily in terms of the immense social cost related to criminalization. Cases of acute psychotic reaction to marijuana, and other hallucinogens, are now rarely seen in emergency facilities, despite the fact that the use of marijuana is increasing at an estimated rate of 20 to 30 percent per year. The estimated rate of arrest is 31 per 100 for the sale of illicit substances and 3.1 per 100 for the